

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
PARKS, OPEN SPACES, CONSERVATION & FOOTPATHS COMMITTEE  
held on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009  
at the Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford, Essex**

**Councillors present:** Chairman K Holmes, Vice Chairman Mrs A Heath, Mrs J Barney, Mrs T Bateman, Mrs E Chippette, Mrs C Cunningham, J Dickson (in part), Mrs M Dorrell, Mrs J Fern, A James, V Leach, D Weir and Mrs M Weir.

**Also Present:** Mrs H Glynn.

**1) Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting:**

Cllr R Patient (unwell). Members accepted the apologies tendered.

**2) Declarations of Interest:**

Cllr Mrs Glynn declared an interest should any subject arise relating to the park opposite her address.

**3) Approval of the Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:**

Members approved the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes.

Cllr Mrs Glynn made a request to the Chairman that she would like to become a Member of the Parks Committee and receive copies of the Minutes in future. The Chairman advised Cllr Mrs Glynn in accordance with Standing Orders under section 28 she may apply to become a Member at the next AGM and in the meantime she may attend the meetings but had no right to vote. The Clerk confirmed that was the case but he would be able to include Cllr Mrs Glynn on the circulation list for the Parks Minutes in future.

**4) Parks – Action List Update:**

The Clerk went through the action list.

- **Arrange for clearance of ponds on a timely basis:** The Clerk had received information from Southend Borough Council that they cleaned their ponds manually. Members discussed the current state of the ponds. Cllr Mrs Weir advised the Wildlife trust had volunteered to clear the ponds and she felt the committee should pursue that option. The Clerk reiterated that Pennywort was difficult to eradicate as any roots left behind would swiftly grow back. Cllr Holmes highlighted the ponds could be dangerous and thick with mud and Cllr Mrs Weir informed that the Wildlife trust would use a boat. Cllr Mrs Heath agreed with Cllr Mrs Weir and providing the Wildlife Trust had adequate insurance cover in place she felt the option should be pursued. **The Chairman proposed a working group be set up to liaise with the Wildlife Trust with a view to clearance of ponds and working in conjunction with the organisation responsible for protecting the newts.** Members agreed to the proposal.
- **Footpath signs:** Cllr Mrs Heath declared an interest as a friend of the artist (Gary Morley), however, she advised she would be driving him to the Priest's

house in the near future to enable him to take photographs in order to paint a picture of the house.

- **Research provision of allotments:** Cllr Weir identified the Christmas Tree Farm site as potential land for allotments and **proposed ‘That HPC write to RDC to request that they consider the compulsory purchase of the Christmas Tree Farm site for use as allotments.’** Cllr Mrs Heath seconded. The Chairman re-iterated that at the last meeting Members had been asked to identify potential sites to be considered for allotments and he had identified an area next to St. Mary’s Church, Cllr Mrs Glynn had previously notified the Clerk of land suitable by Hogarth Way and Cllr Mitchell suggested land in Mount Bovers Lane, previously used as a nursery. A lengthy debate ensued over the suitability of the Christmas Tree Farm in light of the David Wilson Homes planning application. The Chairman sought the advice of the Clerk and the Clerk warned that he felt putting in an application to purchase the Xmas tree farm for allotments would be regarded by RDC as disingenuous and it would not help HPC’s case to identify the Christmas Tree Farm as allotment land. He added it was far outside what HPC could afford and in his opinion it would damage the reputation of the Council with RDC. The Chairman thought it would not be funded by HPC, any financial burden would be on RDC. He advised the proposal had been properly seconded and having heard the Clerk’s advice, Members were now asked to vote. Cllr Weir re-emphasised his reasoning in proposing the Christmas Tree Farm as an ideal location, there was no planning application in the core strategy for that specific land and as it stood, it was agricultural land and had always been used for that purpose. Cllr Mitchell added the owners of the land he had identified at Mount Bovers were looking to gain planning permission. The Clerk reminded Members that the core strategy identified potential sites in the vicinity of the Christmas Tree Farm as land proposed for extensions to the residential envelope pre 2020/21. Cllr Mrs Weir pointed out that half an acre had been allocated for allotments in the Wilson’s planning application. The Chairman then asked Members to show hands on the proposal put forward by Cllr Weir **‘That HPC write to RDC to request that they consider the compulsory purchase of the Christmas Tree Farm site for use as allotments.’** Members voted and the motion was carried. The Chairman summarised the committee agreed to instruct the Clerk to write to RDC naming the 4 areas of land identified above as potential sites for allotments to be considered for compulsory purchase and Members agreed. Cllr Leach said he would assist the Clerk in wording the letter to RDC. Cllr Mrs Glynn requested it be noted that she took no part in any of the conversations relating to the matter apart from identifying land in Hogarth Way.
- **Work Programme for ROSPA:** The Clerk to schedule work with Groundsman in due course. The Chairman of Council had asked representative from Abacus to meet Groundsman and obtain quote for repair to small holes in soft matting in Magnolia and Elizabeth Close playgrounds.
- **Tree Thinning in Spencers Park:** See Agenda item 8.
- **Spencers bridle path:** The Chairman advised that once the main work had started, the works required at the Council’s end would commence. Cllr Mrs Glynn advised the equestrian fraternity wished to be involved in that.
- **Litter/dog bins collections:** Cllr Mrs Glynn reported that since the bin by the entrance to Magnolia had been taken away there had been no more trouble with dog mess in that area as she had been monitoring the situation. The Clerk

responded that a Member of the public had requested that the dog bin be replaced.

- **Adult Gym:** Lisa Jefferies had confirmed that the best funding option was to apply for an 'Awards for all' grant for £10K and RDC would probably match funds up to £5K. The application turnaround could be as quick as 6 weeks. The Clerk to apply on his return. Details of the exact equipment and supplier could be specified once the money approved.
- **Disabled access, Spencers:** Members agreed to contract out the work for installing the access points. The Clerk to action on his return.
- **Log seats to be replaced with new benches in Spencers:** The Chairman advised once the ground had softened the Groundsman would install the benches. He added he had instructed the Groundsman to take away the previous log seat as it had nails sticking out of it. Once the seats were in place, item to be removed from action list.
- **Complaint about surface of Magnolia Bridle path:** The Clerk updated that ECC compacted the surface but it remained a problem being very loose and the horse riders continually complained. He added when the first heavy rains fell it would wash it out and ECC would have to re-look at it then. Cllr Mrs Glynn advised 2 bollards had been put in at the access via the bridle path at Lincoln Road preventing the Grounds man from gaining access to work on HPC land and asked if anyone knew who held the keys. The Clerk said he would look into it.
- **Financial Planning:** See item 6.

**5) Financial Report:**

The Clerk went through the Financial Report, there were no questions and Members accepted the Report.

**6) Budget Proposals 2010/2011:**

The Chairman announced that next month the Committee would have its draft budgets from the Clerk and asked for any suggestions to be put forward for consideration.

- Cllr Mrs Heath requested a provision in the budget to purchase bluebells to be planted under the trees at Spencers Park. The Chairman advised this would come under the wild flower bed budget already provisioned for and he noted the request.
- Cllr Mrs Weir asked for a provision in the budget for fencing to be erected all the way along the brook on the HPC side. Members queried the boundary and the Clerk said he would check the boundary on the deeds and confirm.
- Cllr Mrs Glynn suggested budgeting to employ a contractor to dig out parts of Magnolia pond again.

The Chairman and the Clerk noted the budget proposals.

**7) Approval of new Park Gate Padlocks:**

The Chairman asked Cllr Leach to give a verbal report. Cllr Leach advised that over the last 3 months 10 padlocks costing £12-18.00 each had been purchased to sustain security. He asked if there was a particular reason why the Parish did not use fire brigade padlocks and the Clerk responded that about 4/5 of them had been lost because other people had the keys and HPC used good quality non fire brigade locks to prevent access. Cllr Mrs Glynn supported the Clerk's comments and went onto to praise the new height barrier. She asked what colour it would be painted and Cllr

Leach thought it would likely be painted green after more welding had been done on the posts. **The Chairman asked Members for their approval of the new Park gate padlocks and Members unanimously gave their approval.**

**8) Tree Thinning Work – Spencers Park:**

The Chairman advised there was a need to choose the right contractor now the quotes had been received. Cllr Leach passed on the Grounds man's comments that Essex Arb had been very helpful over a period of time. Cllr Mrs Glynn proposed that the Committee hire Essex Arb as they had worked for the Council before. Cllr Mrs Weir agreed and added she would prefer to utilize them as they used woodchip on the floor and would leave some logs around for the wildlife. Cllr Holmes advised it was intended that the logs be taken to the nature reserve, the proposal was that the logs be cut, the stumps be ground and the site be cleared and that is what both quotes should reflect. The Clerk clarified the difference in price between the quotes was because Essex Arb previously costed to remove the bough of an oak tree and excluding that from the quote, the prices would be comparable. Cllr Mrs Heath queried that the estimates did not state that they would be grinding the stumps. Cllr James queried Essex Arb reducing the price of their quote if the bough of the oak tree no longer needed to be removed and the Chairman advised there were some enormous poplars and he had asked Essex Arb to take one of them out so it would be like for like. **Cllr Mrs Chippette proposed that Council employ Essex Arb to carry out the work and Cllr Mrs Dorrell seconded.** Members voted and the motion was carried.

**9) Summary of decisions:**

- The Clerk to include Cllr Mrs Glynn to the circulation list for Parks Minutes.
- Pond Working Group to be set up to liaise with the Wildlife Trust with a view to clearance of ponds, working in conjunction with the organisation responsible for the protection of newts.
- Members identified 4 potential sites for allotments and agreed to instruct the Clerk to write to RDC to request the sites be considered for compulsory purchase. Cllr Leach to assist in wording the correspondence. Areas identified were Christmas Tree Farm, land next to Hogarth Way, site adjacent to St. Mary's church and old nursery at Mount Bovers Lane.
- The Clerk to look at bollards at Lincoln Road bridleway to assess access to HPC land.
- The Clerk to note budget proposals for 2010/2011.
- Members approved Park gate padlocks.
- Members approved quote from Essex Arb - the Clerk to instruct Essex Arb to commence tree thinning works at Spencers Park at the appropriate time.

Chairman